

Visitor Management Strategy update

Purpose

This paper from NatureScot provides a further update on progress with partnership work to address national visitor management issues for spring 2021.

Action

For information/comment as needed. Members are however asked to decide on the process for finalising the review of the Forum's guidance on managing camping with tents (see page 2).

Background

As members will be aware, the outgoing Forum Convenor attended a meeting in mid-September, convened by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism, which brought together a range of national bodies with interests in tourism and visitor management. This meeting aimed to initiate action to address the visitor management issues that arose in the summer and autumn of 2020 as far as possible in advance of the 2021 tourism season. As previously reported to the Forum, this resulted in the establishment of a multi-agency process, led by VisitScotland, to implement a national Visitor Management Strategy. This paper provides a further update on recent activity.

Governance

A partnership structure has been established to support this process, with a small CEO-level Steering Group comprising the main public bodies and chaired by VisitScotland. This is accompanied by thematic sub-groups focusing on Education & Marketing (chaired by VS), Investment & Infrastructure (chaired by CNPA) and Prevention, Regulation & Reassurance (chaired by Police Scotland), and an Operational Co-ordination Group chaired by NatureScot. As this implies, the process therefore includes access issues along with a range of wider visitor management activity. This collective effort is co-ordinated through a high level Visitor Management Strategy (working draft attached as annex) which links to Scotland Outlook 2030, the wider national strategy for tourism.

A number of NAF members and member bodies are involved through the various groups, and the Forum also has a direct role in relation to a number of actions which relate to access.

Key areas of current action

The action that has been identified is very broad in scope and cannot all be achieved by spring 2021. Some of these actions also have inherently longer lead times, for example because they involve statutory processes such as development management or depend on consultation with stakeholders, strategic planning, guidance or funding. A key overall aim within this timescale is therefore to achieve visible progress, reassuring local communities and other stakeholders that the issues that arose in 2020 are being addressed. It will also be important to ensure that the necessary longer term action is in hand to support the Strategy and Outlook 2030. Current priority actions are summarised below.

Co-ordinated messaging

Many of the public-facing communication needs that have been identified by the Education & Marketing sub-group can be achieved relatively quickly. These include a high profile welcome

campaign for visitors emphasising the importance of enjoying Scotland's outdoors responsibly, and joint promotion of more specific messages from the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, including key issues such as dogs, fires, camping and litter (see separate Forum paper). These will be undertaken collaboratively by VisitScotland, NatureScot and other key bodies, and will be supported by a toolkit of resources for use by partners.

Staffing

Experience during 2020 has underlined the value of staff on the ground, including seasonal rangers, and further recruitment to such posts is being actively progressed by a number of partner bodies.

Collaborative management at key hotspots

Both National Parks and a number of local authorities are developing plans to improve visitor management at key locations for spring 2021. To support this, the Prevention, Regulation & Reassurance sub-group has identified five priority areas – NC500, Highland Perthshire, LLTNPA, CNPA and East Lothian - in which to develop and test practical approaches involving collaboration between, for example, access authorities, land managers, roads authorities and the police.

Visitor infrastructure

Previous discussion at the Forum and elsewhere has highlighted the key role of built infrastructure, such as car parks, toilets, campsites and waste disposal facilities, in effective visitor management. The Investment & Infrastructure sub-group is mapping the distribution of visitor management pressures and developing an overview of infrastructure requirements that have so far been identified. A range of new facilities in key areas including Highland, Perth & Kinross, Fife and East Lothian will be supported through VisitScotland's [Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund](#) (RTIF), and short-term measures such as new temporary toilets, campsites and overnight provision for motorhomes will also be put in place where possible for spring 2021. However, high quality infrastructure cannot be provided more widely, to the extent required, within this timescale – and this is perhaps the most significant constraint on visitor management action for spring 2021.

Funding

The need for increased investment in visitor management, including infrastructure and services (eg. seasonal rangers), has also been recognised through this process. This can draw on current sources including the RTIF, and NatureScot has launched a new [Better Places Fund](#) to help support collaborative visitor management planning. Resourcing continues to be a live area of discussion.

Key actions for the Forum

As noted previously, NatureScot has key roles in a number of access-related actions which are directly relevant to the Forum. These include the national campaign to promote key SOAC messages, which is covered by a separate paper on the present agenda.

The Forum's camping sub-group is also reviewing the Forum's guidance on managing tent-based camping to reflect experience during COVID-19 and inform further action for spring 2021. This is underway by correspondence and a revised version has been circulated to the sub-group for further comments. **This will need to be finalised quickly for early circulation to managing bodies, and it would therefore be helpful to decide how best to sign-off the final version.**

As previously noted, the VMS Operational Co-ordination Group has also considered the scope for clearer national and local messaging around fires, and this will be discussed with the Scottish Wildfire Forum and NAF camping sub-group. This is likely to require a slightly longer timescale, and may therefore need to be undertaken separately from the development of the above guidance, but this work will need to inform relevant SOAC messaging from spring 2021.

Annex: A VISITOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND – Working draft (version 3) - 7 December 2020

Purpose	To develop a Scotland-wide strategic and coordinated approach to Visitor Management fit for the 2030 vision				
Context	The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in unprecedented visitor demand in many parts of Scotland, highlighting both the enormous potential of our tourism sector and the significant challenges we face to develop the capacity of our current visitor infrastructure and services and to increase responsible enjoyment of the countryside. A national partnership led by Visit Scotland with support from NatureScot and other partners has therefore been established to address these challenges, focusing initially on spring 2021 and including the longer term action needed to ensure sustainable visitor provision, management and behaviour.				
Vision	To create a dynamic, forward looking and inclusive approach to Visitor Management for Scotland "Scotland, a leader in 21 st Century Visitor Management"				
Mission	Through strategic leadership and by harnessing the collective skills of our partners in the private, public and third sectors we will deliver a world class approach to Visitor Management that protects our environment, respects our communities, enhances the experience of our visitors and supports a thriving tourism sector				
Values	Ambitious	Place-based	Collaborative	Innovative	Outward-Looking
	Through leadership, hard work and imagination we are committed to the pursuit of new and inclusive ways to deliver Visitor Management	We take a place-based approach that respects our communities and protects the environment in which they live and work	Team spirit creates transparency, trust and respect. The meeting of our diverse minds sets us apart from the rest.	We regard change as opportunity. Progression is at our core. We are committed to fair and just transition to net-zero	By looking to the world to learn and better ourselves, we will take Visitor Management in Scotland to new heights.
Strategic Pillars	We inspire life-long love affairs with Scotland: Informing and educating our current and future visitors to value Scotland's environment and enjoy it responsibly		Together, we build a quality product and visitor experience: Investing in Scotland's current and future visitor management infrastructure and services		We use our combined knowledge, skills and resources to drive implementation: Delivering a joined up and cohesive action plan across Scotland
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build Scotland's reputation as a sustainable tourism destination 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify thematic and geographic priorities for addressing visitor infrastructure needs/visitor management responses 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop our understanding of visitor management issues and opportunities to inform strategy and action

<p>What we do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect everyone who lives in Scotland with the outdoors in an engaging and positive way benefiting the well being of the population and a renewed respect for Scotland's environment • Develop long-term relationships with current and new visitors who enjoy Scotland's outdoors • Work collaboratively to develop consistent messages across all information channels about responsible access and visitor behaviours • Mobilise information and advice to enhance the visitor experience and encourage visitors to spend more time enjoying Scotland's outdoors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align and expand current funding streams to meet demand for investment in sustainable visitor infrastructure • Promote better planning and delivery of infrastructure including sharing case studies and models for the sustainable management of facilities • Realise opportunities to integrate visitor facility needs with other public infrastructure projects such as roads projects • Support the development of an improved low cost, low carbon rural transport network with hubs and services at key locations to reduce vehicle pressures and carbon emissions, and provide alternative travel options and employment opportunities • Work with the private sector to expand capacity and services meeting growing demands for campervans, tent-based camping and other public facilities such as parking and toilets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop effective and joined up arrangements for governance and stakeholder engagement in visitor management at both the national and local level • Develop our visitor management workforce including ranger services to engage with the visitors on the ground • Ensure that the necessary regulation and enforcement measures are in place and complement wider visitor management approaches • Monitor and evaluate progress towards better visitor management locally and nationally • Celebrating and communicating what we are doing in Scotland further afield
<p>Key Enablers: Internal/External</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Invest in <u>infrastructure and services</u> that enhance the visitor experience, add value to our communities and protect the environment</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Flexible, specialist and passionate <u>people</u> who embrace change</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Strategic local and national <u>partnerships</u> will be our most potent differentiator</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Strong and consistent <u>communications</u> to our audiences to ensure responsible choices and behaviours</p>		

Visitor Management Strategy Steering Group Overview

Strategy	Informing and Educating our current and future visitors	Investing in Scotland’s current and future visitor management infrastructure and services	Delivering a joined up and cohesive action plan across Scotland	Becoming and remaining a World Leader in Visitor Management
Activity Overview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver an integrated inspirational & informative marketing campaign to promote responsible countryside enjoyment (priority - UK/EU audiences). 2. Refresh SOAC promotion, with targeted campaigns (priority – dogs, fires, dirty camping) and the development of new education resources for distribution via Schools, Colleges/Universities and Youth organisations. 3. Development of a Communications toolkit for partners & industry to use including shareable resources promoting responsible countryside enjoyment 4. Deliver a programme of stakeholder & industry networking events to develop and share key messages and resources 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop short and long-term investment priorities through a refreshed RTIF and other relevant funding streams. 2. Develop and implement proposals for improved provision for camping and motorhoming across Scotland. 3. Review, pilot and innovate technological solutions for providing real time visitor management information at key locations. 4. Trial low-cost, low carbon and integrated transport solutions at key locations to help reduce traffic management and parking issues. 5. Review and enhance current provision and funding for rangering workforce to support visitor management. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put in place effective governance arrangements to provide national leadership and co-ordinated action for visitor planning and management. 2. Invest in visitor management partnerships in key areas to improve local visitor planning arrangements and address anti-social behaviour. 3. Support communities to develop the skills and capacity to develop local approaches to visitor management. 4. Develop a communication plan with a key messaging framework to ensure stakeholders, partners and industry are kept up to date and engaged with the work of the Visitor Management Strategy. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish and make effective use of the evidence base – map issues and pressures and monitor improvements in visitor experience and behaviours. 2. Learn from global experience and share our emerging good practice in sustainable visitor management. 3. Ensure that visitor management strategy remains a high profile element of the 2030 vision and is integrated with other work to implement this vision. 4. Undertake regular reviews of progress with the strategy every three years.
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More people from all backgrounds enjoying Scotland’s outdoors responsibly and sustainably 2. More communities and land managers actively involved in, and benefiting from, visitor management 3. Scotland’s reputation for sustainable tourism and climate action enhanced 			
Outputs (KPI’s to be developed for each subject to funding availability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of common messaging on responsible behaviour across the public and third sectors, community & industry. • Improved range of well-managed and maintained visitor facilities and services, including low carbon transport schemes. • Enhanced visitor experience. • Increased local economic benefits from tourism. • Reduction in irresponsible countryside behaviour. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attraction of new audiences to the countryside. 			
High Level Income				
High Level Spend	Marketing -£ Content Development - £ Education Resources- £ Communication & industry engagement- £	Infrastructure - £ Service provision (including rangers) -£ Demonstration activity – visitor information and traffic management - £	Visitor management partnerships - £ Skills and training- £	Evidence base - £ Sharing good practice - £